Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Team
May 24, 2016 Meeting Summary

Decisions and Actions from Meeting

Decision
1. Accepted the April 21, 2016 meeting summary as final.

Action	Assignment
1. Frame how to brainstorm recovery strategies and actions for the June retreat.	Joe Anderson, Elizabeth Babcock, Bob Wheeler, Claire Chase
2. Identify Chinook projects from lead entities to include in the June retreat brainstorm for steelhead recovery strategies and actions.	Jeanette Dorner and Tristan Peter-Contesse
3. Draft a letter on behalf of the Recovery Team to the Puget Sound Partnership requesting legislative funds to support watersheds' recovery work for steelhead populations.	Elizabeth Babcock

Welcome, Introductions, & Old Business – Bob Wheeler, facilitator for the Puget Sound Steelhead Recovery Team ("Team"), welcomed participants and led introductions (*see end for a list of participants*). There were no changes to the draft agenda. The draft of the April 21, 2016 meeting summary was accepted as final with no edits. There were two announcements, including:

- Jeanette Dorner shared that the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) will soon lay off several personnel due to budget issues. Jeanette is one of the seven lay-offs; her last day will be at the end of August. PSP is still determining how to transition her work portfolio to others. Elizabeth Babcock encouraged the Team to do whatever appropriate to remind PSP of the importance of Jeanette's work.
- Elizabeth Babcock notified the Team that NMFS is still working with the plaintiffs to resolve the litigation. She is prepared to share the Team's work plan and recently shared the Team's general time frame and milestone dates to get to a final Recovery Plan. She also noted that the plan will address the "4 H's" (hatcheries, harvest, habitat, and hydropower). Elizabeth will keep the Team updated as this work continues.

Recovery Goals

Joe Anderson is leading the effort to work with each co-manager to discuss the approach for developing the recovery goals. He had first met with the Puyallup Tribe, and main updates included:

- Great turnout from the tribe, which allowed for a wide-ranging conversation about steelhead, their habitat, and the meaning of recovery goals. While they discussed a lot, they plan to meet again at least once to continue and finalize their work on the recovery goals specific to the population's abundance and productivity.
- They discussed the level of data from traps and how to estimate survival. The tribe noted that the best data is for the White River, and the ongoing monitoring should happen there as well. Their main habitat concerns are with the two dams.
- Also discussed were the impact of the dams, and the effect of the level of uncertainty in the model.

The Team identified the need to frame these issues for the upcoming retreat to understand how the projects fit into recovery goals.

The Team then discussed if and how to define roles for populations. Joe suggested that if populations are defined into different roles, it would help in his communication with co-managers about the use of recovery goals. Joe asked for suggestions for how to design recovery goals (especially for habitat) that explicitly address the need for recovery projects. PSP will look into how to graphically display the funding mechanism so the Team can discuss more about this at a future meeting.

Pressures & Stressors

Susan O'Neil and Scott Redman have had two working sessions with Ed Connor, Ken Currens, and Tristan Peter-Contesse to discuss the steelhead pressures assessment, using the Puget Sound Pressure Assessment work from 2014. Susan and Scott presented preliminary results from their steelhead pressures assessment, and points included:

- The Team considered whether the pressure assessment could be used, at least as a cross-reference, like the EDT model. The Team questioned whether this tool is robust enough, and whether it could be used as a framing tool in combination with other known information, and further refinement.
- Susan explained that the tool could be useful as a foundation if the ESA listing factors are accounted for, though it will still be important to use other tools and literature to round out the discussion on steelhead pressures. She also suggested that the Team could speak to a small number of steelhead experts to review the tool to see if it lines up with steelhead biology.
- PSP offered to look at the mix of recovery projects being proposed across watersheds to implement the Chinook recovery plan, to better inform the steelhead recovery projects discussion at future meetings.

Support to Watersheds

The Team discussed what watersheds will need to develop their recovery chapters, the next steps for engaging watersheds based on their needs, and potential sources of technical, policy, and financial support. Like other state agencies, PSP is currently working on their budget proposal which is due to the Governor's Office likely in September. In previous discussions, the Team has indicated interest and support in PSP pursuing funding for the watersheds to have capacity to write their recovery chapter, and the Team maintained this direction. It was noted that while some watersheds may not be ready in one to two years to write their recovery chapters, others are eagerly waiting for the signal to start but need capacity funding. They also agreed to draft a letter to PSP asking the agency to support this endeavor in their budget proposal, including:

- Acknowledge that there currently is no standing body to do steelhead planning;
- Refer to the Salmon Recovery Council's statement to support steelhead recovery planning as a priority;
- Keep specific monetary values out of the letter;
- Refer to the difference between this funding need and that of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), which is focused on marine survival research.
- Elizabeth Babcock agreed to discuss this further with Laura Blackmore and Dave Price before the retreat.

Draft Recovery Plan

Claire Chase reviewed the updated Recovery Plan. The Team agreed to be familiar with the Plan for the retreat, as it captures recently-shared ideas from some Team members. Some drafting assignments were given, to be completed over the next few months. Claire and Elizabeth will send out the newest version before the retreat.

Critical Habitat Designation

There was a question and answer session about critical habitat designation with Steve Stone of NOAA, based on the questions Steve had received from the Team generated at an earlier meeting. When NOAA created the steelhead critical habitat, NOAA followed the guide from 2005, better documenting how they got to critical habitat designation with online reports, maps, how NOAA assesses value, economic analysis, and benefits balancing.

Below are the responses to the questions presented:

1. *Question: Why was the Elwha habitat included, compared to other areas above dams that could be removed?*
   Response: NOAA designated critical habitat behind dams if accessible by trap and haul. The Elwha is unique because the dams were actively being removed, and a significant amount of habitat was behind the dams. The main reason for the designation was that the Elwha represented 10% of how much was occupied by the MPG, and had both winter and summer runs. The habitat is one of the few areas in the west that is essential, with active restoration and unique lifeforms. However, NOAA typically does not designate critical habitat above dams since they do not want to get ahead of recovery actions in the recovery plan.

2. *Question: How would Hydraulic Project Approvals (HPAs) be related?*
   Response: HPAs are a state requirement, and there is no regulatory connection to critical habitat.

3. *Question: Explain the cost-benefit analysis ("balancing process") for clarification.*
   Response:NOAA has broad discretion what and where to designate critical habitat, and this process is different than the listing process which does not account for economic factors. Critical habitat specifically factors in section 4 (b) (2) of the ESA, which states "after taking economic impacts" into account. However, critical habitat cannot exclude the habitat if it will cause the species to go extinct.
   A. An example is the Lake Washington region, in which NOAA broke up steelhead into 66 watersheds to look at: past watershed history to forecast density and types of consultation, amount of modification costs, and associated costs; then multiplied by density. This allowed a team of biologists to rate the watersheds as high, medium or low; and in the end NOAA only excluded three with low conservation values.
   B. Some areas are considered ineligible because they are: located on Department of Defense (DOD) properties; on Tribal land (most tribes usually choose not to be designated as critical habitat); or under a habitat conservation plan. State and private forestlands are also excluded from the designation.

4. *Question: How are the fish valued in this analysis? Review highlights of the 4 (b) (2) report.*
   Response: NOAA convened federal experts, watershed by watershed, to use a number-based system. The numbers were for habitat features and quality, current and historical habitat, and unique habit features. Then they provided a high/medium/low conservation value for steelhead. Fish habitat was then valued by criteria: spawning, rearing habit, summer and winter run (scored higher), and abundance. The bulk of areas got a high mark, a few low/medium.

5. *Question: How does the steelhead critical habitat map compare to the Chinook critical habitat map? (e.g., how much more critical habitat is added when compared to the Chinook map?)*
   Response: The steelhead critical habitat includes a lot more tributaries and headwater areas, about 1000 miles more for steelhead than Chinook (roughly). Also, there are about 12 more populations for steelhead than for Chinook. NOAA did not designate nearshore for steelhead as that is mostly designated under the Chinook map.

6. *Question: Why is the lower South Fork Nooksack River excluded, especially when they've been seeing degraded habitat with warmer temperatures?*
   Response: NOAA identified about 84 miles of habitat, including tributaries. 60% of the habitat is excluded (overlapping with Tribal land or are under the DNR HCP). NOAA did not distinguish between areas with agricultural lands on one side of the stream.

7. *Question: What does a Section 7 consultation imply for areas that are in or out of the critical habitat?*
   Response: When a listed species invokes jeopardy and/or when there is a critical habit supplemental analysis, whatever the federal agency is doing there, it cannot adversely modify or destroy critical habitat. The federal agency must determine the habitat features and speak to them in their analysis. It adds a more nuanced habit discussion to consultation.

8. *Question: How does designating critical habitat maintain the baseline or help get to recovery?*
   Response: Designating critical habitat provides context that is relevant to federal activities, and maintaining and restoring habitat is important.

9. *Question: There appear to be differences between the large format map and detailed maps of critical habitat. Also, there are areas excluded from designation through the existence of HCPs that may otherwise require consultation (i.e. hydroelectric relicensing in an area covered by a forest lands HCP. How can project sponsors learn more detail about the designation?*
   Response: Interested parties can contact me (Steve Stone) about these details.

After Steve presented the responses, the Team discussed how critical habitat will or will not be used moving forward in the recovery planning and implementation phases.

Workgroup Progress Reports

Three workgroups had already given updates through the meeting, so that left one update from the Habitat Protection Workgroup. The group feels that a good base of information about habitat protection is available, but that the recovery team first needs to come to agreement on pressures affecting steelhead. This will help the workgroup focus habitat protection information on pressures occurring in specific geographic areas and land use types.

Membership

Elizabeth, Bob, and Claire had drafted preliminary Team membership criteria, done in order to address the stable and fluctuating participation from some designated Team members and others who are interested in the process. The Team was asked to review the criteria in advance of the retreat.

June 23 & 24 Retreat & Field Tour

Claire Chase reviewed the general plan to have an all-day retreat in Bellingham on Thursday, June 23 and then a field trip on Friday, June 24 in the Nooksack basin. Ned Currence is working on identifying field tour sites, which could include the diversion dam, Nooksack River glacier/non-glacier forks, an engineered log-jam project, and one of the lowland agriculture dominated streams that have high steelhead productivity.

Administrative Updates and Questions

- Next meeting: June 23 & 24, Bellingham
- The Team considered filling out a strategy/actions template for the retreat. One Team member suggested it should be connected to the linkage library. Elizabeth, Susan, Tristan, Bob, and Claire will work together before the retreat to refine this template.

Public Comments
There were no public comments at this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:35 pm.

Participants:

Name	Affiliation
Joe Anderson (phone)	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Elizabeth Babcock	NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service
Alan Chapman (phone)	Lummi Nation
Ed Connor	Seattle City Light
Ned Currence	Nooksack Indian Tribe
Jeanette Dorner	Puget Sound Partnership
Jeff Hard	Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Steve Hinton	Skagit River System Cooperative
Paul McCollum (phone)	Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
Susan O'Neil	Long Live the Kings
Tristan Peter-Contesse	Puget Sound Partnership
Scott Powell	Seattle City Light
Scott Redman (phone)	Puget Sound Partnership
Phil Sandstrom	Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
Steve Stone (phone)	NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service
Bob Wheeler	Triangle Associates
Claire Chase	Triangle Associates
Trina Blake	Triangle Associates